

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 1552

EXDIS

EA FOR HOLBROOKE FROM SHOESMITH

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, JA, US
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO JAPAN -- A PERSONAL FOOTNOTE

REF: TOKYO 1496

1. THE EMBASSY HAS ASSESSED THE MAIN ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND BROAD SIGNIFICANCE OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE'S VISIT. THE FOLLOWING ARE MY OWN IMPRESSIONS OF THE DIRECT IMPACT THE VICE PRESIDENT HAD ON TOP JAPANESE LEADERS, AS ONE PRIVILEGED TO ACCOMPANY HIM TO THE PLENARY SESSIONS AND THE DINNER.

2. THE VICE PRESIDENT HAS CONVINCED JAPAN'S LEADERS THAT THEIR VIEW AND CONCERNS WILL RECEIVE A FULL AND FAIR HEARING FROM THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. THE JAPANESE NOW KNOW THAT THE NEW AMERICAN LEADERS ARE DETERMINED TO ENGAGE IN A JOINT COOPERATIVE EFFORT TO RESOLVE COMMON PROBLEMS.

3. AT THE VERY OUTSET OF THE FIRST PLENARY FUKUDA SEEMED DEFENSIVE TO ME, REFLECTING PERHAPS SOME OF THE APPREHENSIONS WITH WHICH THE JAPANESE INITIALLY APPROACHED THE VISIT. BUT HIS WORRIES THAT THE US MIGHT "PRESSURE" JAPAN TO ADOPT ECONOMIC, DIFFICULT POLITICAL AND EVEN MILITARY POLICIES WERE
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QUICKLY DISPELLED BY THE VICE PRESIDENT'S UNDERSTANDING AND APPROVAL OF FUKUDA'S ECONOMIC GAME PLAN, AND BY HIS CANDID DESCRIPTIONS BOTH OF THE US ECONOMIC PACKAGE AND THE VIEWS OF THE EUROPEANS. THE VICE PRESIDENT QUICKLY PUT THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN A MORE RELAXED MOOD AND OPENED THE WAY FOR THE FRANK AND CONSTRUCTIVE EXCHANGES THAT FOLLOWED.

4. IF THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS ADVISERS WERE RELIEVED TO FIND THAT THE US WOULD NOT "PRESSURE" JAPAN, THEY HEARD VERY CLEARLY THE VICE PRESIDENT'S APPEAL THAT JAPAN ASSUME A STRONGER, MORE POSITIVE, AND BROADLY GLOBAL APPROACH TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY. THE FORCE OF THIS MESSAGE WAS THE GREATER BECAUSE IT WAS FORTHRIGHT WITHOUT BEING CALLOUS TO JAPAN'S CONCERNS. THOUGH JAPAN'S RESPONSIVENESS TO THE APPEAL REMAINS TO BE MEASURED AGAINST FUTURE ACTION, I THINK IT IMPORTANT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER DURING HIS TOAST IDENTIFIED HIS GOVERNMENT WITH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S PERCEPTION OF THE MULTILATERAL RESPONSIBILITIES SHARED BY THE WORLD'S THREE MOST POWERFUL ECONOMIES.

5. I AM SURE THAT THIS MORE POSITIVE CONFIDENT ATTITUDE WILL MARK FUKUDA'S APPROACH TO THE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER IN MARCH. EQUALLY IMPORTANT I SENSE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER NOW FEELS THAT HAS ESTABLISHED A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRESIDENT THROUGH THE VICE PRESIDENT. REACTING TO MR. MONDALE'S CANDOR AND GRASP OF THE SUBJECT MATTER, FUKUDA TOOK PRESIDENT CARTER'S TELEPHONE MESSAGE AT ITS WORD AND DEALT WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT AS IF HE WERE TALKING TO THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF. IN BOTH SUBSTANCE AND PERSONAL FEELING, THEN, THE MONDALE VISIT WAS AN EXCEPTIONALLY VALUABLE PRELUDE TO THE MARCH SUMMIT.

6. THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE VISIT ARE NO GUARANTEE OF EASE AND SMOOTH SAILING FOR THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP, HOWEVER. ANY RELATIONSHIP AS ALIVE AND MANY-STRANDED AS THAT BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE US IS BOUND TO BE MARKED BY DISAGREEMENT AND EVEN SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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IRRECONCILABLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST. THE CHALLENGE FACING BOTH GOVERNMENTS, THEREFORE, WILL BE WHETHER THEY CAN ACHIEVE A GENUINE MEASURE OF ACCOMMODATION TO THE INTERESTS AND CONCERNS OF THE OTHER. I BELIEVE THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT HAS DONE MUCH TO PREPARE THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT TO ENGAGE IN SUCH A JOINT EFFORT. NOTHING COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT, GIVEN THE CONTRIBUTION WHICH JAPAN CAN MAKE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF NEW ADMINISTRATION'S OBJECTIVES OF STRENGTHENING RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR KEY ALLIES AND PROMOTING A REVITALIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY WHICH WILL BENEFIT THE WEAK AS WELL AS THE STRONG.

HODGSON

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